

---

# *WORLD WAR II*

In the years preceding World War II, we moved several times for training purposes. Starting in September 1919, our unit was stationed in Fort Meade, Maryland. Shortly thereafter, the regiment was moved to Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky and then to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. After several years at Fort Bragg, we were reassigned to Madison Barracks, New York. In 1939, "Hamilton's Own" was reunited with the 1st Infantry at Fort Benning, Georgia. In October 1940, the Division was "streamlined" or triangularized. The 5th Field Artillery Regiment was reorganized into the 5th Field Artillery Battalion.

In this redesignation, the unit was entitled to keep Battery D as one of its three firing elements because of our ties to Hamilton's Revolutionary War battery. From July 1941 to July 1942, the battalion was stationed at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Several months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor drew the United States into the war, our unit sailed for England aboard the Queen Mary. This trip was no luxury cruise, as we were to prepare for the North African landings. In September and October, the entire division received amphibious assault training in Scotland for the landing at Oran, North Africa.

In November 1942, we boarded ships once again and sailed for North Africa. Temporarily armed with 105mm howitzers, Hamilton's Cannoneers assaulted the shores of Arzew Beach in support of the 16th Infantry fighting against the Vichy French, an armed force from the southern portion of France, which had formed an alliance with Germany. The ensuing campaign resulted in the first of eight battle streamers for World War II. This streamer bears the words ALGERIA-FRENCH MOROCCO.

Once Oran was captured, we regained our assigned weapons: Four 155mm Schneider howitzers, which had been manufactured during World War I. The British First Army, attempting to capture Tunisia, was in need of artillery support, so were quickly dispatched to join them. While on a reconnaissance mission to Djedeida, the advanced party was ambushed by the Germans. Our commander, Captain Joseph Frelinghuysen, was captured by the German Army, and the battalion commander was killed. Fierce German counterattacks pressed the battle up to the muzzles of the 5th Field before being repulsed.

Our first major encounter with the Germans was on February 13, 1943. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel launched his last offensive in North Africa at the Kasserine Pass in the central mountainous region of Tunisia. Our unit was not prepared for the strength and speed of the German Panzers. The Germans advanced so rapidly that our guns had to literally fight for their lives against German tanks. Our unit used direct fire against the Panzers, but was soon overwhelmed by superior numbers. For the second time in our history, we were forced to abandon our guns and equipment. Even though

we lost our guns and many men, the 5th was rearmed with 155mm M-1 howitzers within 24 hours and rejoined the fight. For our valor, the French Government awarded us the Croix de Guerre with Palm, embroidered KASSERRNE.

On the March 23, the 10th Panzer Division, one of Germany's finest armored units, launched an attack near El Guettar. The 10th Panzer was augmented with the dreaded 88mm anti-aircraft/anti-tank guns and would have dealt the First Division a heavy blow, had it not been for the devastating fires of the 5th Field and other artillery battalions. The Allies Captured over two hundred fifty thousand prisoners. Revenge for our lost guns had been granted. The battle streamer inscribed TUNISIA has a long story.

Once the Germans and Italians were routed from Africa, the Allies prepared for the invasion of Sicily. On July 10, 1943, the 5th Field Artillery landed near Gela, Sicily with the special mission of supporting a Ranger assault team on the left flank of the Division. The Germans launched 21 individual counterattacks, and one of these reached a point only a thousand yards from the beach. The devastating fires of the 5th Field Artillery broke up the initiative of these counterattacks and aided in the consolidation of the beachhead. The Hermann Goering Panzer Division fought well, but could not overcome the power of the 155mm cannon.

Driving into the heart of Sicily, our unit supported difficult fighting to seize the strategically located village of Troina. Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division found entire German units, which had become casualties to our concentrated fires. Accurate fires from our unit aided in the capture of the island. For taking part in operations on Sicily, we were awarded a third campaign streamer, embroidered SICILY, bearing an arrowhead signifying direct participation in an assault landing.

After the conquering of Sicily, the Division returned to England in preparation for the landings on Normandy. From October 1943 until June 1944, our unit trained for the amphibious assault against Hitler's vaunted Atlantic Wall. We used these months to rest our men, replace equipment damaged in battle, and conduct landing exercises on the English coast on preparation for Operation Overlord. On June 6, 1944, advanced elements of our unit landed on bloody Omaha Beach along with the rest of the First Division, for which we earned a streamer with arrowhead marked NORMANDY, and the French Government bestowed upon us a Croix de Gueffe with Palm embroidered NORMANDY. By the morning of the 7th, our guns were in place and firing to dislodge the 352nd German Infantry Division.

Heavy German resistance in Normandy forced a stalemate. The heavily entrenched Germans refused to yield while the Allied advance stalled in the hedgerow country. A major offensive was needed to breakthrough the German lines. On July 25, our fires helped force a gap in the German defenses at St. Lo, and American troops poured into France. The Division drove deep into France and was in position to help in the closing of the Falaise Gap, preventing thousands of Germans from retreating into Germany to man the defenses of the Siegfried Line. In its rapid advance, the Division killed or captured thousands of Axis troops. For these actions, we earned the streamer embroidered NORTHERN FRANCE.

Pausing briefly at Mons, Belgium, the Division turned westward to engage Germans

it had bypassed in its rapid advance. The remnant five divisions of the German First Army were annihilated in just five days. The grateful Belgian Army cited us in the Order of the Day for this action. Entering German soil on September 12, our guns laid siege on Aachen. The Germans saw this city as a symbol of the defense of the Fatherland and stiffened their resistance. The surrounded Germans became the targets of one of the most intense artillery barrages of the war. The defenses weakened and Aachen was captured. After six weeks of bitter fighting, including terrible action in the Huertgen Forest, the Siegfried Line was finally breached. Our unit earned another streamer for actions in the RHINELAND.

On December 14, the 1st Infantry Division was withdrawn from battle for some much needed rest. The rest period was very short lived, for on the 16th, the Germans began their Ardennes Offensive in an attempt to split the Allies and drive them back into the sea. Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt launched his eighteen divisions and gained thirty miles of territory before being stopped. The devastating artillery support lent by the 5th Field Artillery and the three other battalions assigned to the 1st Division slowed the German advance and prevented a breakthrough. On December 21, we contributed to the Division Artillery fires, which surpassed 10,000 rounds. By early January 1945, the German offensive was over. Two days later, our counterattack began. The Belgian Army again cited our unit in its Order of the Day for action at Eupen-Malmedy, and our colors later received a hard-won streamer marked ARDENNES-ALSACE.

The Division fought on toward the Rhine River, and crossed at the Remagen Bridgehead on March 16. The 5th had crossed the Rhine following World War I, and carried the very same colors for the second crossing. Driving deep into Germany, we provided non-stop support to the infantry, shelling the retreating Germans until the last day of the war. In early May 1945, our unit was near Hof, Germany, when we received word that Germany had surrendered. We earned the campaign streamer inscribed CENTRAL EUROPE for these final months of the war. In the course of the war we earned the right for all soldiers assigned to the unit to wear the Belgian Fourragere and the French Fourragere.

Following Victory-in-Europe Day, our battery began its role as an army of occupation in Cheb, Czechoslovakia. We were subsequently assigned to several different locations in Germany, including Trisdorf, Ansbach, Alsenau, Amberg, Regensburg, Grafenwohr, and Fulda. Our unit would remain in Germany in the Army of Occupation for almost a decade.



